



Royal Berkshire Fire Authority RESPONSE STANDARDS CONSULTATION

May 2016



PREVENTING | PROTECTING | RESPONDING

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Response Standards Consultation

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1. Introduction

Our key responsibility is to make sure we provide an effective fire and rescue service for communities across Royal Berkshire. Our service is provided by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and your Chief Fire Officer Andy Fry and his team are overseen by the Fire Authority, who are ultimately accountable to you as residents and business owners.

(Colin Dudley, Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority)

Our Mission: RBFRS is committed to ensuring the communities of Royal Berkshire are able to lead safe and fulfilling lives.

In 2016, following a public consultation, the Fire Authority published its [Corporate Plan/Integrated Risk Management Plan \(IRMP\) 2015-2019](#), setting out Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's strategic commitments to the communities of Royal Berkshire, and a new, exciting vision of how the service will look in 2019.

This consultation is the next stage in an ongoing programme of consultations which will help us to understand your views as we shape the way we deliver our service to you. A key part of that work is to look at how we define and measure our response standards, that is the measurement of how long it takes our fire engines arrive at an emergency.



2. Current Position

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority considered the findings from the [IRMP 2015-19 consultation](#) at a meeting on [25 April 2016](#). They reached a decision to progress the four priority projects outlined in the previous consultation. The first key element of this work is to ensure our response standards are fit for purpose and are clear and easy to understand as we move towards developing these projects. You can read more about the IRMP 2015-2019 consultation, as well as our [Consultation Strategy](#) at www.rbfrs.co.uk

2.1 What do we currently do?

Currently, our published standards for attending incidents are as follows:



- *‘We have an optimum response, where we are committed to attending an incident within 8 minutes for the first fire engine and 10 minutes for the second fire engine for dwelling fires’*
- *‘We have a standard response, where we are committed to attending in 10 minutes for the first fire engine and 12 minutes for the second fire engine for dwelling fires’*
- *‘Higher risk locations, where it is predicted that fire engines will not reach dwelling fires within the standard response, we will prioritise for Prevention initiatives’*
- *‘We are committed to making an initial attendance to RTCs with the necessary resources to commence extrication of casualties, within 11minutes’*

These are reported and measured in the following ways:

- a) We currently use attendance standards – this means we measure how long it takes a fire engine to get to an emergency incident, from the time the crew is mobilised by a control operator to the time the engine arrives on scene.
- b) We currently only measure attendances for dwelling fires and RTCs. All other incident types are not measured or reported on.

- c) We currently do not have a published target to achieve, instead we report our performance in terms of incidents previously attended.
- d) We currently have standards for both the first fire engine to arrive and in other circumstances for the second fire engine to arrive at incidents.

Our approach to emergency response is to ensure we have the right numbers of firefighters, fire engines and specialist appliances, at the right place, at the right time, delivering the right standard of response.

This will not change and it is our priority to always respond to a 999 call as quickly as we possibly can.



3. Why are we consulting on this?

Prior to the implementation of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, RBFRS had a set of national standards for responding to fires. Professor Sir George Bain produced a wide-ranging [report](#) into how fire and rescue services were operated and managed, and about the working conditions of firefighters in the UK. On publication, the report set out recommendations for how fire and rescue services should change in the future to meet the demands of the twenty-first century.

In May 2013, Sir Ken Knight, in his report [‘Facing the future’](#) stated:

“It is for each fire and rescue authority to determine their own rules for response times.”

In 2014, a [peer review](#) of RBFRS could not find rationale for our current response standards, this identified that they were overly complex, difficult to understand and should be realigned with the Fire Authority’s new strategic commitments. This was in part because they do not currently align with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) definition of a [response time](#):

“A response time measures the minutes and part minutes taken from time of call to time of arrival at scene of the first vehicle.”

The Fire Authority then directed a review of operational response standards. You can view the Fire Authority's strategic commitments and find out more about us at www.rbfrs.co.uk.

4. Looking Forward

RBFRS recognises it is important to review the way in which we report our current response standards and consult with the people of Royal Berkshire on any proposed changes to ensure the following:

Clarity – It is important that information presented about the measurement and reporting of response standards is clear and easy to understand for members of the public.

Transparency – It is important that RBFRS presents transparent information in relation to our response standards and performance against these standards.

Manage and track our performance – RBFRS needs to monitor, manage and track our performance against defined standards so that we can clearly report on these to the Fire Authority, members of the public and other key stakeholders.

Reflect change in the nature of incidents – RBFRS is committed to responding to the changing needs of our community and reflecting this in the way in which we respond to any new and emerging threats.

We are not, at this point in time, consulting on any changes to the location of fire stations, the number of fire stations or how these are crewed.

This consultation relates solely to how we define and report information on our performance when we respond to emergencies.

Later this year, we will be consulting on proposals and options for station locations, the number of fire engines we have and how these are crewed. This future consultation will shape our community risk management arrangements for at least the next four years.

5. How to get involved

The response standards consultation will run from Monday 16 May – Monday 25 July 2016.

It is important for RBFRS to consult on proposed changes to our response standards with all the people of Royal Berkshire. It is vital to us that we seek the views on any

proposed changes to our service delivery to ensure that the communities of Royal Berkshire have their say and play a part in shaping the future of RBFRS.

Over the following pages, we will present four distinct proposals for changing the way in which we currently define and report our response standards.

- **Specifically, we are asking you to express your preferred choice for each of the four proposals**
- **For each proposal, we want you to tell us if you would like to *keep it the same* as it currently is, or to *change it* in line with the details given.**
- **We would also appreciate your view and ideas on whether there is anything else we should consider in relation to this consultation.**

We value your feedback, views, ideas and opinions. There are a number of ways that you can feedback your preferred choice for each proposal:



You can respond to the IRMP consultation on our website www.rbfrs.co.uk



You can write to us with your comments, ideas or views at:
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, IRMP Consultation, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SD



You can email us at irmp@rbfrs.co.uk



You can telephone 0118 938 4331 and leave us a message



You can visit your local station and discuss any issue you have with the duty crew



You can follow us on social media – both Twitter and Facebook

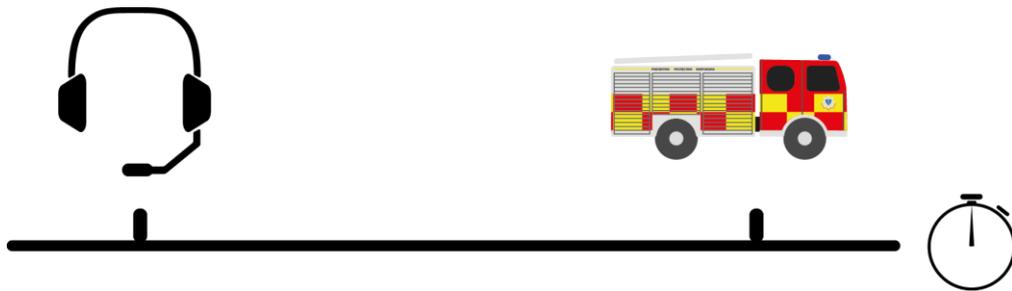


You can attend Fire Authority meetings; dates available on our website

Proposal 1: How should we measure the time taken to respond to an incident?

What we currently do:

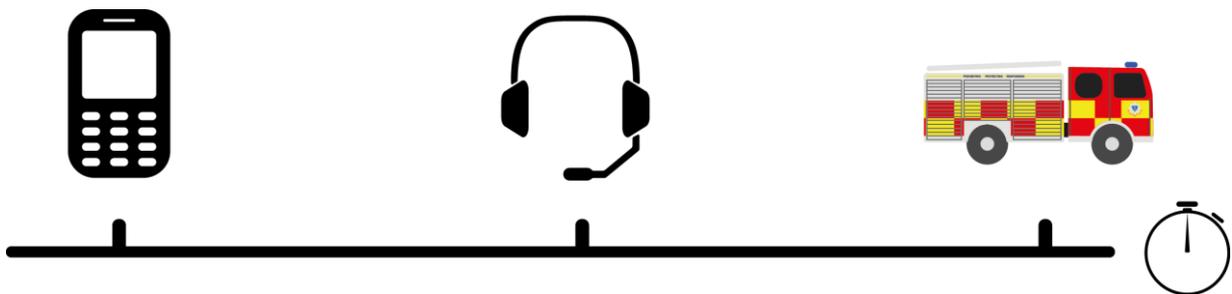
- Our standard measures an *attendance time*
- An *attendance time* is measured from the time a Control operator alerts the crews at a fire station to the arrival of a fire engine at the incident



Or

Proposal for change:

- An alternative is that the standard measures *response times*
- A *response time* is measured from the time the **call is received by** Control to the time a fire engine arrives at the incident



What would the proposal mean for the people of Royal Berkshire?

- Measuring *response times* would be a clearer measure that starts the clock running from the moment a caller dials 999
- This aligns with the DCLG definition of a **response time**

Proposal 2: What types of incidents should we report on?

What we currently do:

- Our current attendance standard measures only those attendances to 'dwelling fires and road traffic collision (RTC) incidents'



Or

Proposal for change:

- The standard should include 'all emergency incidents'



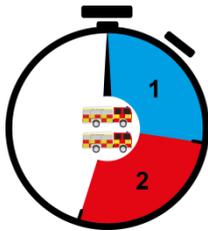
What would the proposal mean for the people of Royal Berkshire?

- Measuring 'all emergency incidents' would include all types of incidents, including flooding, rescues from height and chemical spills, as well as dwelling fires and road traffic collisions
- Measuring 'all emergency incidents' would reflect the changing nature of incidents occurring in Royal Berkshire and include new and emerging threats
- Measuring 'all emergency incidents' would give a more accurate reflection of what RBFRS does

Proposal 3: How many fire engines should be measured in the response standard?

What we do currently:

- Our current measures: for dwelling fires, there is a two fire engine response standard and for RTCs a single fire engine response standard



Fires



RTCs

Or

Proposal for change:

- To be more consistent and align to the DCLG definition of a response standard, the response standard should measure the attendance of the first fire engine to arrive at an incident



What would the proposal mean for the people of Royal Berkshire?

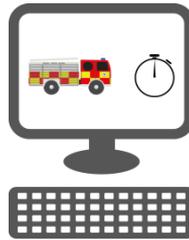
- RBFRS will still send more than one fire engine including specialist support vehicles if the nature of the incident requires them. These are set by our **pre-determined attendances** which designate the number of fire engines for each scenario
- A single fire engine response standard applied to all incidents is more consistent and therefore, easier to understand than a number of multi-fire engine standards
- It aligns RBFRS to the national DCLG definition of a response standard

- Second and additional fire engine targets will be monitored internally

Proposal 4: How should we express the reporting of our response standards?

What we do currently:

- Our internal performance monitoring systems measure the attendance times of the fire engines for each station. This tells us when we have not met our expected attendance times



Or

Option for change:

- The response standard would be published as a **target** percentage, as this would create a more transparent and measurable reporting response standard
- This would be expressed as:

“ We will target our operational response activities to arrive at incidents within ‘X’ minutes on ‘Y’ % of occasions.”



What would the proposal mean for the people of Royal Berkshire?

- Publishing a target percentage provides transparent information for the public

- Publishing a target percentage provides a clear measurable reporting standard for the public
- By publishing a percentage target, **we are not changing our station locations, the number of fire engines and how they are crewed**
- The tables below are based on our existing community risk management arrangements and shows our current response times (based on previous performance data from 2012-2014) across a range of times for the first fire engine arriving at dwelling fires and road traffic collisions

Time for 1st Fire engine to dwelling fire (in minutes)	8	9	10	11	12
How often we make this time (%)	60%	70%	77%	82%	85%

Time for 1st Fire engine to Road Traffic Collisions (in minutes)	8	9	10	11	12
How often we make this time (%)	43%	52%	60%	68%	75%

* Tables relate to current attendance times plus an average call handling time of 90 seconds

- The table below is based on our existing community risk management arrangements and shows our predicted response times (based on previous performance data from 2012-2014) across a range of times for the first fire engine arriving at all incident types

Time for 1st Fire engine to all incident types (in minutes)	8	9	10	11	12
How often we make this time (%)	55%	65%	75%	80%	85%

* Table relates to current attendance times plus an average call handling time of 90 seconds

- By expressing the standard in this way we can clearly report our ongoing performance, and show any impacts and benefits future changes may have to our service based on our modelling data
- The table above shows that whichever number and percentage is used, you will always get a fire engine when you need one. The variation in times is due to a number of factors that can include incidents in remote or rural areas, traffic congestion, difficult access, etc.

We value your feedback about these proposed changes to how we currently define and report our response standards. We also want to hear your view and ideas through this consultation about whether there is anything else we should consider in relation to these matters.

7. Next Steps

This consultation is part of the ongoing process of how we manage community risk in Royal Berkshire. The next stage in this process will be to develop the four key projects outlined in the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-19 and will look at some fundamental aspects of our service, including station locations, numbers of fire engines and shift patterns. These options will need to enable Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to balance its budget for the 2015-19 period.